

## **Task Force C Meeting Summary**

### **Tuesday, March 21, 2006**

Task Force Participants: Kenyatta Brame – Sysco Food Services, Elaine Brown (temporary chair) – Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Kathy Fedder – MI Department of Agriculture, Chris Lietzau – MI Department of Agriculture, Marla Moss – MI Department of Education, Lee Wheaton – Charlotte High School.

Additional Participants: Jeanne Lipe – MI Department of Agriculture, Viki Lorraine – MSU Extension and Michigan Farm to School Coalition, Patrick Williams – MI Department of Corrections and Kristine Fedewa.

The fifth Task Force C: Promoting Michigan Foods meeting convened Tuesday, March 21, 2006 from 9:30 – 11:30am, Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Member Elaine Brown chaired the meeting.

Ms. Brown called the meeting to order and introduced Marla Moss and Viki Lorraine, who delivered a presentation to the Task Force on farm-to-school challenges, opportunities and successes in Michigan. The benefits of bringing fresh local produce into schools are manifold: expanding markets for farmers, increasing nutrition and nutrition education (and thereby health and potentially academic performance) in schools, and increasing awareness of food and food systems in schools.

One of the biggest challenges to farm to school efforts are federal procurement regulations. School food services generally receive some federal money to procure food to be served in school cafeterias. The Code of Federal Regulations specifically prohibits geographic preference in bid requests [7CFR 3016.36 (c) (2)]. Since the federal money is commingled with state funds, states must abide by federal procurement regulations, and cannot, therefore, specifically request local foods for their food service. Aside from federal procurement regulations, hurdles (both real and perceived) to farm to school initiatives include: cost of locally sourced foods, reliability of consistent supply, seasonality of produce, delivery problems, student food preferences, and inconvenience.

There are, however, several successful farm to school initiatives around the country, and in the state of Michigan. Many of these initiatives use non-federal funding, or work within federal guidelines to fund their projects. A practical way to meet federal regulations while purchasing local food is to utilize the small purchase threshold for food. For purchases less than the “small purchase threshold”, food service directors can direct their bid requests to specific vendors/farmers, instead of the traditional open bid request.

Farm to school initiatives encompass a broad range of projects, including, but not limited to: school gardens, field trips to farms and farmers' markets, nutrition education, purchases of food service meal items and/or snacks directly from local farmers and/or farmers' co-ops, etc.

There are a number of examples of farm to school programs in Michigan, and many food service directors have expressed interest in such programs, but they all face significant challenges in expansion or replication.

The Task Force discussed the recommendations presented by Ms. Moss and Ms. Lorraine. The policy recommendation is as follows:

**Recommendation C3: Increase the purchase of Michigan-produced foods by Michigan schools for service to students.**

- a) MDA should assist farmers in working with school food service directors.
- b) MDE should assist school food service directors in working with local farmers.

MFPC staff will further develop this recommendation (C3) and send it to the Task Force for feedback and further input.

The next Task Force C meeting is scheduled for April 18, 2006, 12noon – 2pm, Constitution Hall, Hutchinson Room (lower level) and lunch will be included. The Task Force will be discussing the topic of Eastern Market in Detroit and other terminal markets and distribution issues generally.